

Michelle Harven: This is Force for Hire.

Desmon Farris: A deep dive into private military contracting, and how it's transforming the battlefield.

Michelle Harven: I'm Michelle Harven.

Desmon Farris: And I'm Desmon Farris.

Michelle Harven: You may have heard about a Russian contractor company called the Wagner Group. They've been brought up a couple times by guests on this show, and that's because Moscow has increasingly turned to the use of contractors in its global interests. There have been reports of the Wagner Group in places like: Syria, Ukraine, Central Africa, among other places. Wagner isn't Russia's only PMC, but they've certainly been the most reported on and these groups make for some riveting old-school mercenary accounts; that's because they take on more of an active combat role, and why some have called them a private army.

Desmon Farris: To this day the Kremlin denies the existence of Wagner, or any Russian state-supported private armies. But it became harder to deny after Russian contractors came head-to-head with US forces in Syria in a four hour battle in February of last year. It resulted in a US airstrike estimating to have killed around 100 contractors. But as Wagner and other Russian PMCs quietly make their way into more spots around the globe, there are still many questions about how they operate and whether their operations could lead to more armed confrontation between American and Russian forces.

Michelle Harven: So to learn more we brought in Sergey Sukhankin, a research fellow at the Jamestown Foundation and a lecturer at MacEwan University and the University of Alberta. We started the conversation talking about Russia's historical use of covert PMCs.

Sergey S.: Well, if we go back to history, we'll see that the Soviet Union, uh, while confronting the United States and the West, uh, in Africa, in Latin America. So they were employing so-called Soviet military advisers or military instructors, which today might be seen as members of quasi-PMCs. Back then this was an integral part of the Soviet Armed Forces, but they, of course they were clandestine. They started from the collapse of the USSR until relatively, again, until 2009. This period was characterized by the fact that Russia itself was undergoing quite a difficult historical interim, and in many ways this was a haphazard transformation, haphazard experience. For example, if would take a look at Russia's so-called volunteers that operated in the Balkans in Transnistria South Caucasus, it was a very peculiar combination of proto-PMCs or mercenaries and true volunteers. For example, Mr. [inaudible 00:02:51] was one who fought on the Balkans and later would transfer his knowledge during that old outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis.

Michelle Harven: Why do you think it's important to understand the historical significance of PMCs? To understand today's modern version of PMCs in Russia?

Sergey S.: Yeah. Well, uh, because this is an apparent continuity and tradition in terms of Russia's use of private military contractors. In fact, we cannot call those entities that we see today, like the Wagner Group or the [inaudible 00:03:24] or before that Slavonic Corps Limited, as PMCs; they are basically either private military contractors or private armies. But again, the operative principles are something that they learned on the Balkans in Transnistria, in other regional conflicts, it's still there.

Michelle Harven: So you brought up Wagner, why don't we go into that? Can you explain what is the current Russian group known as Wagner?

Sergey S.: From my research, from what I've been doing, I have come to the conclusion that the Wagner Group is in fact a special project of the GU, or the main directorate of the general staff of armed forces, and it was first used on the territory of [inaudible 00:04:08] when it crossed the border in May 2014 as two tactical groups. In fact, the Ukrainian chapter of the Wagner Group was the most decisive one. It basically would signify this transformation from some hybrid entity into quasi-private military army, sort of private military group. Because in Ukraine what they did, they performed various tasks arranging from military and paramilitary activities to reconnaissance, intelligence collection, sabotage. So basically it was Ukraine that formed, that contributed to creation of the Wagner Group.

Michelle Harven: Why does Russia use these, as you say, quasi-paramilitary or quasi-PMCs?

Sergey S.: Yeah, in other words mercenaries. Right?

Michelle Harven: Right.

Sergey S.: And in 2011 we saw emergence of the first Russian PMC with the so-called Moran Security Group, and in 2012 the head of the Moran, that is [inaudible 00:05:12], he actually after the episode with uh the Myre Seadiver affair, when the Russian vessel that belonged to Moran was detained by the Nigerian authorities, he actually said that, "Well, we've got nothing here. We cannot compete with Western PMCs because the whole world," as he said, "was divided between Western PMCs."

Sergey S.: The next move they did was this creation of the, uh, Slavonic Corps Limited, and which signified this attempt to change the rules of the game. Because Russia was unable to play by these rules, uh on the world PMC market, and this was an attempt uh, Russia was a clear anecdote, it was trying to change the unfavorable environment by sort of using the drawbacks, the minuses that Russian quasi-PMCs had, for their advantage.

Sergey S.: So this is, uh, reason number one. Basically in order to become a player in the realm, in this environment of uh PMCs, Russia had to do something original. And in other words, to use PMCs not like classical Western PMCs, but like private armies. So this is reason number one.

Michelle Harven: So it's like a competitive advantage?

Sergey S.: Yes, yes. Absolutely. Absolutely. Because again, Russia could not play by the rules. It did not have, you know, this uh influence. It did not have this reputation. So what they could do, they could try to change the rules of this game.

Michelle Harven: Have they been... I mean, we've seen the Wagner Group in a- a good amount of areas now. Has this competitive advantage worked?

Sergey S.: Well, I guess yes. If we take a look at Africa for example, uh we'll see that Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, uh, other places uh there, the dictators, uh, their political leadership is quite interested in uh cooperating with the Russians uh, for one main reason. Russian PMCs officially they don't exist. So there is zero accountability for their activities.

Michelle Harven: And how does Wagner stay under the radar? How do they not get accountability? How are they doing this? Because they are working with governments, uh, it would seem that their actions would be taken into account by journalists, by groups on the ground.

Sergey S.: Well, (laughs) one of the main reasons is that they don't exist on paper. So officially they don't exist, and this grants the Russian side, the so-called plausible deniability. So, uh, they can send those people to work in Ukraine, in Syria, in the Middle East, in Africa. But there is zero accountability for their actions because uh as well as you've hear- as you've heard, uh, all Russian officials are saying, uh, when asked about Wagner or other private military contractors, the kind of answer they have, "Well, we don't have PMCs."

Michelle Harven: Let's explore Africa for a second. Can you talk about how Russia mercenaries are making their way to Africa?

Sergey S.: Well, again, these are just theories because we don't have much information on that. We know for certain that in, uh, the CIR they were invited by the president. Something that both, uh, the African side and the Russian side have confirmed, uh, so they are ... Well, it- well, at least what it was from the surface, uh, the Russian military advisors how they call them, they are present in the CIR by the invitation of the local political event.

Michelle Harven: It's interesting that, uh, they can deny it, uh, so much because we had, uh, last year US Commandos fight a four hou- a four hour battle with Russian mercenaries who were working with pro Syrian government forces. Uh, did this

bring anything to light or did this make even American forces consider Wagner as a serious threat?

Sergey S.: Well, in fact it didn't bring anything to light, uh, except the three main things. Uh, first of all, it actually confirmed that the Wagner Group it does exist because before that those were just rumors. Now we know for certain that they do exist, uh, and they operate in Syrian ... They have been operating in Syria, uh, since at least 2015. Uh, and this shows that whatever the- or whenever the Russian side says we are not there, uh, it's- it should be right vice versa so basically it's one thing, one conclusion that could be drawn.

Sergey S.: Uh, secondly is that the Wagner Group is primarily affective against, uh, poorly trained and technologically weaker opponent. Uh, and this could be and I think it has been concede by the Russian, uh, Armed Forces. That could be sort of a lesson for the Russian Armed Forces that, uh, weakness in technologies and especially in drones, uh, could have, uh, serious repercussions for or, uh, in scopes of a conflict, uh, that could be waged against, uh, technologically stronger opponent.

Sergey S.: And thirdly, the Wagner Group from where I stand again with the third conclusion that we- that, uh, we could make is that the Wagner Group is an easily disposable cannon fodder, uh, that the Russian side can use, uh, whenever and however it wants, uh, without any repercussions.

Michelle Harven: Yeah and who- who are these fighters then? If, uh, you know, they're being used as cannon fodder?

Sergey S.: Well a typical person, a typical por- portrayed of a typical, uh, PMC or quasi-PMC member is a middle aged man, uh, somewhere between 35 and, uh, well the upper boundary's about 50 years of age. Uh, usually from the Russian provinces. Uh, the majority of them, approximately up to 90%, they either were involved or had previous military experience. Many of them could not find themselves in civilian lives so basically, aside from economic interest, they definitely ... They feel isolated, uh, in civilian lives so this combination makes them go and, you know, pursue their interests. Uh, make money abroad engaging in those groups, in those kind of groups.

Michelle Harven: You mention that a lot of what we know is due to, uh, investigative journalists. We had a situation in July where three Russian journalists were killed in the Central African Republic while investigating the Wagner Group. Can you talk about the significance of this event?

Sergey S.: Well, it's not just one event. Actually we had much similar deal. A person who was investigating the Wagner Group, who accidentally, uh, fell out a window, uh, and died. Uh, so basically we have a number of cases when, uh, people who were digging or trying to dig deeper, uh, have been either prosecuted or ended up, uh, being dead. So this shows that, uh, the Russian side, uh, is involved in

the regions, uh, in Africa, uh, in other regions and this is a clear message that, uh, those who will try to dig deeper and proper and to go to the theater might end up as, uh, the, uh, those three journalists, uh, that you mentioned.

Michelle Harven: Mmm. And how do Wagner or the other Russian groups pursue Moscow's interests?

Sergey S.: Well, I would say that they are three main, uh, areas, uh, why Moscow is interested in employing these groups. First of all, it's geopolitical element so basically it secures Russian presence in zones of confrontation, uh, without direct participation. In other words, uh, plausibly deniability. Uh, so as we can see, uh, Russia is using, uh, those groups to increase it's present or presences, to increase it's, uh, influence, uh, in other regions. So not just Ukraine or Syria. It's, uh, the Central Africa, probably Latin America, uh, and other regions.

Sergey S.: Uh, secondly, the second important moment is geo-strategic or geo-economic moment. Uh, which, uh, allows Russian to make war, uh, a profitable enterprise, something that the Soviet Union lacked. Uh, today Russia is trying to use private military contractors as a force, uh, that secures Kremlins, uh, and some specific individuals, uh, economic interests.

Michelle Harven: And so I know that they're not working, uh, against the Kremlin's interests but how- how closely are they working together or do we have a sense of whose in charge?

Sergey S.: Uh, well I think that, uh there is a [inaudible 00:14:17] sort of actors that is in charge or who are in charge, uh, it's obviously a Russian military of defense, uh, because without them, uh, nothing is basically possible in Russia.

Sergey S.: The second player, or the second element is, uh, the above mentioned GU. Uh, because it would take a look at, uh, Wagner's training techniques and the polygon, uh, that is located in [Mulina 00:14:41], uh, across from [inaudible 00:14:43], uh, which belongs to GU. Actually this shows that, uh, the Wagner Group, uh, its activities are not just, uh, agreed on but also might be supervised by the GU. And I think that the [general staff 00:14:58] because of ... From the information that we have from 2010 it was actually the general staff, uh, that, uh, would first express his interest in, uh, integrating similar companies, similar enterprises, uh, in the structure of Russian Armed Forces.

Michelle Harven: What we talked about before is that Wagner is not the only Russian mercenary group. Can you talk about sort of the economy of Russian private military contracting or how many groups we are aware of or how many we can guess are operating?

Sergey S.: I think that the number of groups ... Well there are different theories about that. Some, uh, practitioners, some experts say that there is more than ten groups. I think that the maximum limit is up to ten groups. Uh, from what we

know, there are also PMC MAR, uh, there is the Unite PMC, uh, which was disbanded in 2019 but frankly speaking I don't believe that it was disbanded. Uh, an extremely interesting case started years, uh, the Unite PMC, this is, uh, sort of a group or ... Again, quasi-PMC, of course that, uh, was quite active during the, uh, Russia's excision of Kryo Myr, then during the, uh, the- the- the- outbreak of instabilities, uh, and they ensued, uh, war on the Ukrainian Southeast.

Sergey S.: Uh, what's interesting about this group is that they're, uh, aside from para-military activities, they also training, uh, Russia's youth and international youth, uh, one of the most notorious affairs while the [inaudible 00:16:43] warfare when the military patriotic camp for the youth, uh, was, uh, closed down by Serbian police, uh, and Unite PMC was actually in charge of the training procedure, uh, training procedures and, uh, what was known later was that, uh, all this affair was supervised by the Russian ministry for foreign affairs, uh, and by the local authorities in Serbia.

Sergey S.: Uh, so, uh, one of the main trends, one of the main features that we can see among Russian para military contractors is that they're trying to, uh, also expand their control, uh, on various youth groups.

Michelle Harven: Yeah and I think that is interesting that this is something that the youth may be getting wrapped up in more and more.

Sergey S.: Yeah, yeah. Yes. Obviously because, uh, today what we see in Russia that, uh, there is a clear trend, uh, toward militarization of Russian youth. And, uh, those, uh, who are not fit for, uh, state sponsored enterprises, st- state sponsored movements, uh, they could easily become a factor to, uh, they could easily be drawn by this, uh, this PMCs. So, again it's quite- quite disturbing, quite worrisome tendency.

Michelle Harven: And you had mentioned, uh, economic reasons.

Sergey S.: Yeah.

Michelle Harven: Can you go into that a little bit more?

Sergey S.: Yeah, this is something that we've seen in Syria, uh, actually the [factor 00:18:15] group was decimated in 2018, in the early 2018, uh, when they were trying to ... Well, reportedly trying to, uh, seize their control over the local, uh, oil fields, uh, and the infrastructure, uh, so, uh, what we know for certain that, uh, Russia is using, uh, it's PMCs, uh, to establish control, uh, over, uh, oil, uh, and uh, natural gas, uh, reserves, uh, resources, um, that are controlled either ... Were controlled either by the cords, uh, or by other formations. Uh, so this was one of the main reasons. Same thing in a- in Africa, uh, and what we know for certain is that, uh, either the petrov PMC or the Wagner Group, uh, they're trying to control, uh, the deposits of, uh, diamonds, gold, other minerals.

Michelle Harven: And what do you see happening in the future with either Wagner of- or another Russian, uh, quasi-military group? What do you see is the potential for the future?

Sergey S.: Well I think that on the basis of what we have seen, uh, is that, uh, well as I said the Russians side is quite happy, uh, about their performance, uh, even though there have been some, uh, you know, drawbacks and the fact that the number of people who are actually willing to join this, uh, quasi-PMCs is quite high so the pool of people is, uh, large.

Sergey S.: Uh, I think that the idea, uh, of this groups it will persevere and, uh, I think we should expect, uh proliferation of their activities, uh, probably would be on the actual spheres.

Desmon Farris: When we return our next guest will help us dive into PMC culture in Africa and much more.

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Michelle Harven: As Sergey mentioned, one of the significant places Russian PMCs can be found today is in Central Africa and Africa is no stranger to military contractors and private security. From Sierra Leone's government employing a mercenary group to restore order to South Africa's modern private security industry. There is a story past with PMCs.

Michelle Harven: So we wanted to talk more about what Russian contractors are doing in Africa and also about Central Africa's relationship with the industry. For that we've brought on Pierre [Shalton 00:21:35].

Pierre S.: So my name is Pierre [Shalton 00:21:38]. Uh, actually pronounced in the correct way in Dutch that would be Pierre [Shalton 00:21:41]. I'm a senior researcher at the Danish Institute for International Studies, which is an independent research institute in Denmark and I'm also an associate researcher at the International Peace Information Service a Belgian research organization into conflict in Central Africa.

Michelle Harven: If we want to set some barriers for where we're talking about here, where are some places in Africa that you focus on?

Pierre S.: So, um, I currently, uh, work mostly in the- the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the DRC, also known as the Congo. Not to confuse it with the little Congo, uh Congo Brazzaville, which is it's uh tiny uh Western neighbor. Um, and then besides the DRC, I also work in the Central African Republic a lot for my ongoing research and the South Sudan.

Michelle Harven: And so recently we're seeing Russian contractors in many of these places. Can you talk about how that's impacting the communities there?

Pierre S.: Yeah, well, I can certainly give you a bit of a, uh, underground perspective on that because I've been to the Central African Republic, uh, quite a few times of the last few years and I know a lot of people- people there. Uh, and I know their perceptions of, uh, of, uh, foreign, uh, foreign engagements in the country and- and in order to understand what, uh, the kind of, uh, presence of the Wagner Group, uh, uh, means for Central Africans today, you need to understand how they look at the french.

Pierre S.: The Central of Republic used to be a French colony and was part of, uh, what the french used to call [foreign language 00:23:12], uh, French Africa. Um, in a way it still is because most of the ... The most important business sectors, uh, formal business sectors are still in the hands of French. Uh, like the sugar- like the sugar import business, uh is run by a French company. So- so these companies have monopolies on the most important products and the French used to have also the highest level of government, uh, advisors for anything from security to tech regimes, of course for French imports and exports, um, and any other kind of matter which would, uh, touch upon the French national interest in the region.

Pierre S.: Um, but over the last few years, French has found it difficult to, uh, maintain an interest in a country which, uh, has lost much of it's strategic interest, was falling apart, uh, because of, uh, internal conflict. Uh, the government only controls 30% of the national territory right now and, uh, by kind of withdrawing from the highest, uh, shaloms of power and the Central African Republic disengaging, um, uh, it has left an opportunity. A kind of void for, uh, anyone who is interested to- to kind of step into.

Pierre S.: Now the French didn't expect actually that someone would step into that place and- and- uh, what Central Africans, how they see it now is that the revolutions are trying to get, uh, into the same kind of position as the French used to be, uh, by, um, placing advisors in the country on the highest level of- of strategic, uh, decision making, uh, which is of course military advisory and military training services as a way into also getting concessions in important economic sectors in the country.

Michelle Harven: And let's talk about the Congo then because there is also a historical significance of military contracting there. Can you go into that?

Pierre S.: Um, so there's a lot of interest recently in, uh, private security, private security companies, mercenaries, new kind of new state actors which somehow have a legitimate or legal mandate to perform service ... Security services we usually, uh, associate with the state, um, but if you go back into history, about a century or so, uh maybe a little bit longer you find that actually, uh, this distinction between public and private security didn't really make sense at all.

Pierre S.: Um, in places like Congo, colonization, uh was done on the cheap, uh, which mean that kind of semi public, uh, uh, ventures such as Global Estates, were actually carried out by private mercenaries or hired guns, um, local armed bands, old times. So, that was very difficult to distinguish between what was actually public and which was private.

Pierre S.: So it is kind of, uh, uh, historically then the distinction between the public and private doesn't make sense to look at security governments if you move back down from say the 1900s, uh, down in history.

Michelle Harven: And so now that we have a sort of background what is, uh, what are the Western actors working in that area today? Or what's that- that modern security structure look like?

Pierre S.: Right so if you wanna understand the kind of private security sector today in the in- in- in the DRC in- in- in the Congo, uh, what you really need to do is you need to look at the mining industry and at [AID 00:26:37] organizations.

Pierre S.: The Congo is a vast country. It's, uh, about as big as Western Europe but it has very little modern infrastructure and the only infrastructure which is again in place is probably linked to the mining industry which has to kind of, uh, provide for it's own roads, uh, sometimes railways, and you'll huge extractive enclaves which I cannot rely alone on the security, uh, that the public security apparatus in Congo can provide.

Pierre S.: And actually when President Kabila, also referred to as [Joseph 00:27:06], the first President Kabila came into power in, uh, 2001 in the context of, uh, of civil war. He wants to attract private investors, mainly in the extractive industries by making it possible for them to actually legally hire and bring with themselves private security companies to protect their operations.

Michelle Harven: And, you mentioned this, but I- I- It sounded like this was something that, uh, through your research you were very surprised upon seeing how AID organizations in the Congo work with contractors.

Pierre S.: If you travel through Eastern Congo right now, or South Sudan for that matter, what you'll find is really, um, landscape which is a bit, uh, dystopic or dystopian if you will. Um, because anytime you encounter, uh, an AID organization what you'll find it actually a kind of, uh, bunkerized, uh, barb wired installation which doesn't at all breathe anything like, uh, AID outreach or- or engaging with the

local population but more one of fear and, um, for the- for the local population, any of the- the AID kind of compounds look the same as- as mining, uh, uh, industries, uh, whereas you would expect that their engagement with the- with the population around them uh, would- would be premised on a totally different logic.

Pierre S.: The way that they actually behave outward ... Outwardly is, uh, uh looks very much the same so however different the missions, uh, and objectives, uh, because they make use of the same private security contractors and the same- same type of, uh, security managers in contexts like, uh, the DRC, and, uh, in South Sudan or the Central African Republic, uh AID organizations and mining companies start to look the same in the way that they behave towards local populations.

Pierre S.: And I think it's legitimate to ask questions. Whether this is the way to, uh, we think as, uh, perhaps tax paying, uh, audiences in the West, uh, whether this is the kind of way that we want to be perceived in these countries.

Michelle Harven: And this may be a distinction that, uh, doesn't quite matter or gets very muddy, but I was wondering, in the DRC or the places that you look at, are we looking at military contracting groups or are these private security groups?

Pierre S.: I think it's a really good question. I think that, um, uh, uh, the distinction is increasingly difficult to maintain. Uh, yes sure there's still, uh, a number of, uh, mercenary like private military company outfits out there but most, uh, of, uh, those kind of companies which- which started perhaps out as more at [inaudible 00:29:44], uh, scrambled together organizations of a few, uh, former soldiers put into private security uniform have professionalized over the years and have also since started to wear ties and they engage in much more day to day kind of security services like static security, advisory, um, et cetera.

Pierre S.: And to make the distinction even thinner, even if, uh, a company would be a foreign private security company like South African working in the Congo, in order to provide effective security, they will need very intimate ties with the people who actually determine security on the grounds. Those are often the Congolese, uh, Generals sometimes even war lords in the area of operation of mining and companies and, uh, AID organizations. So you see that the links between public and private security in practice, uh, are indeed very, very, uh, very, very thin and narrow. And in order to provide efficient private security you need to have very tight links with public security officials. At least that's what they are on paper, right?

Michelle Harven: Did [Rita 00:30:54] take that because troops and security left Middle East, Africa became sort of the new cash cow for contracting companies. Is that a fair assessment?

Pierre S.: Uh, it is. I mean, uh this is a private, uh, a private sector. Which means that it's driven by business logics and if you're interested in having, uh, a product to sell, uh, you in principle would of course like to have unlimited demand. Now the concept of security itself, what is security? When are you secure, right? It's, uh, it's somewhat [inaudible 00:31:29] that you can always kind of pin it out in ways that you're actually never secure. Right?

Pierre S.: It's security. The absence of something concrete, uh, is it a feeling, is it if you have certain measures in place, and I think that the private security industry has been, uh, has really cashed in on this comparative advantage on having something to sell which is in principle, limitless. Um, your client can always be and feel insecure and in fact you actually might be selling this feeling of insecurity to your clients to generate more demand.

Pierre S.: And what, uh, what is definitely a tendency though is that many of the, uh, private security companies that you see now in Africa are spin offs of the kind of organizations which came with the American invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. Uh, and who thrived on the kind of [inaudible 00:32:17] contracts they could get there. Uh, and suddenly found themselves out of work over there and then started to look for new markets. So, they kind of spread of terrorism across Africa that we're witnessing unfortunately today is definitely, uh, something of a business opportunity, uh, of green field markets so to say for this kind of organizations.

Michelle Harven: And I wanted to ask if you've seen any examples of how contracting can work well in the Congo or any of the other areas you focus on.

Pierre S.: So however much I might be critical of the, uh, privatization of security, as, uh, a kind of, um, analytical problem, right? Besides that I do think that, uh private security is actually, uh, a brilliant, uh, economic sector in, um, conflict affect countries or- or, uh, economically underdeveloped countries because what they actually do is they provide, um, low income but kind of stable in- jobs for, uh, youth.

Pierre S.: Africa is a continent where 60% of the population is under, uh, the age of 25. I mean, a big part of the problem is that these unemployed youth might also refer to [comnenity 00:33:30], violence, uh, joint armed groups, et cetera. And I think that in creating this demand for more and more security by the AID industry, um, the mining sector, and increasingly also other, uh, private sectors, um, it has created a lot of demand for young guys to actually, uh, uh, take on this uniform, stand in front of a gate and make this kind of monthly salary.

Pierre S.: So, in that sense, I think it's the best example of, uh, uh, private sector growth in- in very volatile, unstable areas.

Michelle Harven: Thanks to Sergey Sukhankin and Pierre Shalton for talking with us for this episode. Next time we'll be hearing from Chris Hoare, the son of Mad Mike

Hoare. One of history's most well known soldiers of fortune. His father led mercenary forces during the Congo crisis and led an attempted coup in the Seychelles.

Chris Hoare: There were thousands of nuns and priests in the Congo and after Stanleyville had fallen to Mike's mercenaries and the Belgian paratroopers towards the end of 1964 the government asked Mike to please go and rescue the nuns and priests all around the Stanleyville area.

Desmon Farris: Don't forget to subscribe and while you're there, leave us a review. You can also let us know your thoughts at podcast@stripes.com. Also, follow us on Twitter for updates @starsandstripes.

Michelle Harven: Force for Hire's supervising editors are Bob Reid and Terry Leonard. Digital team lead and editor is Michael Darnell.

Desmon Farris: Thanks for listening.

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